HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

WE hope that you will enjoy the opportunities to collect and learn about fossils on your public lands. If you have any questions or wish to apply for a special collecting permit, please contact any of the following BLM offices.

Be sure to take time to enjoy your public land legacy—what one historian has called "the richest free gift that was ever spread out" to America.

ALASKA
222 West 7th Avenue, #13
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599, ph# (907) 271-5555

ARIZONA
222 North Central Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2203, ph# (602) 417-9505

CALIFORNIA
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W1834
Sacramento, CA 95825 ph# (916) 978-4400

COLORADO
2850 Youngfield Street
Lakewood, CO 80215-7076, ph# (303) 239-3670

EASTERN STATES
7450 Boston Boulevard
Springfield, VA 22153, ph# (703) 440-1713

IDAHO
1387 South Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709, ph# (208) 373-4000

MONTANA
5001 Southgate Drive
Billings, MT 59101, ph# (406) 896-5000

NEVADA
1340 Financial Boulevard
Reno, NV 89520, ph# (775) 861-6400

NEW MEXICO
1474 Rodeo Road, P.O. Box 27115
Santa Fe, NM 87505, ph# (505) 438-7514

OREGON
1515 S.W. 5th Avenue, P.O. Box 2965
Portland, OR 97208-2965, ph# (503) 952-6027

UTAH
324 South State Street, Suite 301, P.O. Box 45155
Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155, ph# (801) 539-4021

WYOMING
5353 Yellowstone Road, P.O. Box 1828
Cheyenne, WY 82003, ph# (307) 775-6256

WHAT CAN I DO?

YOU can be involved and contribute to today's exciting advances in paleontology. Many museums and colleges offer opportunities for volunteers to study and work alongside trained professional paleontologists. Contact them to see how you can help.

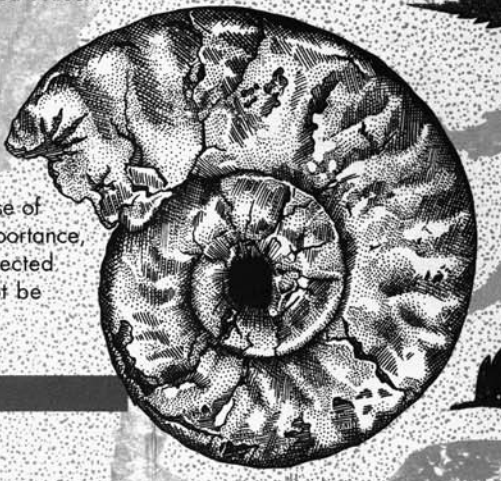
You can also help BLM manage and protect these unique resources by simply reporting the location of any vertebrate fossils you find to the nearest BLM office. This way, land managers can alert professional paleontologists to ensure that the bones are properly removed, studied, and preserved for everyone's benefit. Please do not attempt to remove them yourself. Important information may be lost, no matter how careful you might be. There are also serious penalties for unauthorized collection.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS

IN rare cases, fossils may be found together with archaeological artifacts. Because of their extraordinary scientific importance, such finds are stringently protected by various laws, and must not be disturbed.

FOSSILS

ON AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

FOSSILS

TYRANNOSAURUS REX. Allosaurus. Triceratops. The mere words send the imagination soaring. Children and adults alike are fascinated by the deep past and fossils of all kinds. We hope that this guide will help you understand more about the importance of fossils, and also appreciate the public lands that preserve these remnants of past ages.

WHERE ARE FOSSILS FOUND?

AMERICANS share an extraordinary natural legacy. The Bureau of Land Management manages 264 million acres of public land in the Western United States. The steep, arid and deeply eroded terrain in the West is where fossils are best preserved and most often found. *Allosaurus, Stegosaurus, Deinonychus,* and *Pentaceratops* once roamed what is now public land.

Other fossils, less vivid in imagination than dinosaur skeletons, but no less wonderful include: perfect leaves and flowers; dinosaur tracks on a 165 million year old beach; schools of fish perfectly filleted by scavengers; forests of ancient redwoods; and the oldest known parrots. All are preserved on our public lands.

WHAT ARE FOSSILS?

FOSSILS are the remains or traces of any organism preserved in the earth's crust, and paleontology is the study of these fossils. Through the careful collection and study of our nation's fossils, we can learn the story of origins and endings—life, death, and change—played out over nearly 3.5 billion years of the Earth's 4.5-billion-year history.

Public lands provide for the study of paleontology and also contribute to our knowledge of the Earth's history.

WHY IS STUDYING FOSSILS IMPORTANT?

SCIENTISTS get clues from the tiniest bacteria to some of the largest creatures ever to roam the Earth, swim in its seas, or soar in its skies. These clues help us solve the fascinating riddles of how life on Earth evolved. Fossils illustrate how all forms of life are interdependent and affected by their environment. Fossils or fossil fragments make up the bulk of some rock types such as coal, phosphate, and limestone. They also serve as indicators of other commodities, such as oil and gas, which are important in our economy and everyday lives.

But in addition, fossils are simply fun to study because of their natural beauty and the excitement, wonder, and understanding they evoke about life in ancient worlds lost in time, worlds that we can only imagine.

CAN I COLLECT FOSSILS?

YOU can collect a variety of fossils on public lands, with certain restrictions. Special management designations restrict access and types of activities on some public lands. It is always a good idea to stop by the nearest BLM office to check on local conditions such as land status, fire danger, or road closures. On private lands, fossils may be collected only with the permission of the landowner.

Invertebrates:

No permit is required to collect reasonable amounts of invertebrate fossils such as:

- trilobites
- brachiopods
- ammonites

The invertebrate fossils you collect are for your personal use and enjoyment, and may not be bartered or sold. Please remember to leave some for the next collector, too.

Petrified Wood:

You may collect:

- up to 25 pounds of petrified wood, plus one piece, each day,
- no more than 250 pounds in any calendar year without a permit.

You may not combine your allowance with another collector's allowance to obtain larger pieces of petrified wood.

Museums and other institutions can get a special "Free Use Permit" to obtain amounts of petrified wood over 250 pounds. As with invertebrate fossils, collections of petrified wood are for your personal use and may not be bartered or sold.

Other Plant Fossils:

No permit is required to collect reasonable amounts of plant fossils such as leaves. They are for your personal use and may not be bartered or sold.

Vertebrates:

Vertebrate fossils may only be collected with a permit because of their relative rarity and scientific importance. They include not only bones and teeth, but also footprints, burrows, and other traces of activity. Vertebrate fossils are fragile and complex; and permit applicants must be able to show a sufficient level of training and experience in order to collect them. In addition, all vertebrate fossils collected under a permit must be held in an approved repository.